

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0593

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C O N F I D E N T I A L USNATO 1384

MINIMIZE CONSIDERED

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MPOL, NATO, UK

SUBJ: UK DEFENSE REVIEW; INFORMAL DRC MEETING ON NATO PRESS
RELEASE

REF: A. USNATO 1383; B. STATE 053923

DRC MET MARCH 12 TO DRAFT NATO PRESS RELEASE ON UK DEFENSE REVIEW.
TEXT OF RESULTING DRAFT FOLLOWS BELOW. DPC WILL MEET
MARCH 14 TO CONSIDER DRC DRAFT. MISSION COMMENT: DRC-PRODUCED
TEXT IS ADEQUATE, AND MISSION INTENDS TO APPROVE IT AT DPC
LEVEL. MISSION WILL CONSIDER FINAL WASHINGTON APPROVAL (REF B)
GRANTED UNLESS DPC MAKES SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES. BEGIN TEXT:

1. IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE USUAL NATO PRACTICE, THE UNITED KINGDOM
GOVERNMENT, HAVING REACHED PROVISIONAL CONCLUSIONS ON THEIR DEFENSE
REVIEW, INITIATED THE PROCESS OF CONSULTATION WITH THEIR NATO
ALLIES IN DECEMBER, 1974. THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE CHANGES PROPOSED
HAVE BEEN ASSESSED BY THE NATO MILITARY AUTHORITIES AND THERE
HAVE BEEN SEVERAL EXCHANGES OF VIEWS IN THE DEFENCE PLANNING COM-
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MITTEE OF THE ALLIANCE. THESE TOOK PLACE AGAINST THE BACKGROUND
OF A STATEMENT THAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT REGARDED THEIR PLAN
TO REDUCE DEFENCE EXPENDITURE TO 4 1/2 PERCENT OF GNP BY THE
MIDDLE 1980S AS A FIRM DECISION.

2. AS A RESULT, THE ALLIANCE WELCOMES THE ASSURANCE THAT NATO COMMITMENTS REMAIN THE FIRST CHARGE OF BRITISH DEFENSE RESOURCES; THAT NO REDUCTIONS ARE ENVISAGED IN ADVANCE OF AN MBFR AGREEMENT IN THE LAND AND AIR FORCES DEPLOYED IN THE CENTRAL REGION; AND THAT THE UNITED KINGDOM WILL MAINTAIN THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ITS PRESENT STRATEGIC AND TACTICAL NUCLEAR CONTRIBUTION TO NATO.

3. THE ALLIANCE HAS NEVERTHELESS EXPRESSED ITS DISQUIET AT THE SCALE OF THE REDUCTIONS PROPOSED AND THEIR EFFECT ON NATO'S CONVENTIONAL DEFENSE VIS-A-VIS THE INCREASING CAPABILITY OF THE WARSAW PACT. THE CHANGES OF SPECIAL CONCERN ARE: THE REDUCTION OF REINFORCEMENT CAPABILITY IN THE NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN REGIONS; THE REMOVAL OF NAVAL AND AIR FORCES FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN AREA; AND THE DECLINE IN MARITIME CAPABILITIES IN THE EASTERN ATLANTIC AND CHANNEL AREAS.

4. THE ALLIANCE IS PLEASED TO NOTE, HOWEVER, THAT IN RESPONSE TO ITS REPRESENTATIONS, THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT HAS ANNOUNCED IN TODAY'S WHITE PAPER ITS WILLINGNESS TO CONSIDER CERTAIN COMPENSATORY MEASURES TO OFF-SET THE MORE DAMAGING FEATURES OF THE PROPOSALS, ALTHOUGH THE TOTAL RESOURCES ALLOCATED TO DEFENSE WILL NOT BE INCREASED. IT ATTACHES PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE TO THE UNDERTAKINGS TO CONTINUE TO PARTICIPATE IN NATO MARITIME EXERCISES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AND TO MAINTAIN CERTAIN REINFORCEMENT OPTIONS FOR THE SOUTHERN REGION. IT ACCEPTS THE BRITISH OFFER TO CONTINUE ALLIED CONSULTATIONS ABOUT OTHER MEASURES AIMED AT MITIGATING THE EFFECTS OF THE REDUCTIONS.

5. THE ALLIANCE HAS URGED THE UNITED KINGDOM TO KEEP THEIR NEW PROGRAM UNDER REVIEW, IN CONSULTATION WITH THEIR ALLIES AND IN THE LIGHT OF DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SECURITY SITUATION AS THEY ARISE. THEY HOPE THAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE TO JUDGE THE SCALE AND NATURE OF ITS MILITARY CONTRIBUTION TO NATO NOT IN FINANCIAL TERMS ALONE, BUT IN TERMS OF ITS TOTAL VALUE TO DETERRENCE AND DEFENCE THROUGHOUT THE ALLIANCE.
END TEXT.BRUCE
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